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# Birth-Order Complementarity and Marital Adjustment

Cornelia Vos

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BIRTH-ORDER COMPLEMENTARITY AND  
MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

A Thesis

Presented to  
the Faculty of the Department of Psychology  
Western Kentucky University  
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

by  
Cornelia Jacoba Vanderkooy Vos

April, 1983



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BIRTH-ORDER COMPLEMENTARITY AND  
MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

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#### ABSTRACT

It was predicted that the level of complementarity of birth-order position is positively associated with marital adjustment. This hypothesis was developed from Adlerian (1959) theory about the effects of birth-order position on personality formation and from the Toman (1961) duplication theorem. The Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976) was given to 327 married women. An analysis of variance revealed no significant differences between the various combinations of birth order (no data were available for the only-with-only combination due to insufficient number of subjects in this group). Correspondingly, level of complementarity of birth order was also found to be unassociated with marital adjustment. It was suggested that reenactment of sibling relationships, if it occurs, may introduce negative as well as positive patterns of interaction. It was proposed that research on the association between different patterns of interaction and birth-order combination may yield more results.

It was also predicted that combinations of oldest-born husbands and later-born wives would manifest greater marital adjustment than combinations of later-born husbands and oldest-born wives. However, marital adjustment was found to be greater, although not significantly, for those couples where the wife was oldest-born and the husband was later-born. It was suggested that this finding may indicate the replacement of the traditional by a more symmetrical marital structure and that it may indicate a superior preparation for managing a household on the part of oldest-born women, which preparation may have resulted in greater marital adjustment.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

A successful marriage is the universal goal of all who say "I do." Marriage is vitally important at several levels. Its fate affects the individual deeply and pervasively, for it constitutes the context for the most intimate human relationship possible. Its fate affects the next generation, for it provides the most influential context of the developing child. Its fate affects society, for it contributes to social cohesion and stability. Newlyweds do well to pursue success in such a pivotal involvement.

Less universal than the goal is its attainment. Divorce levels have risen across all age groups in recent years (Masnick, 1980). One in every three American marriages ends in divorce (Pietropento, 1979). Of the marriages that endure, many are far from satisfactory to the partners. While marriage is the context for the most intimate interpersonal relationship possible, it also constitutes the greatest interpersonal challenge presented to most persons.

What factors enhance marital bliss? While parents have often seemed confident about what would be desirable characteristics for their child's spouse, students of human behavior have been less certain. Marriage is an extremely complex phenomenon. Not only does it involve the interaction of two complex beings, both with their set of expectations and characteristics, but it can also be engaged in in different styles and is influenced by the cultural and social environment.

It has been the quest of social scientists to learn what factors, in what combinations, are associated with successful marriage.

Various theoretical orientations have guided researchers. Proponents of the homogamy theory, that marital success is enhanced by similarity of the partners, have found supportive data in demographic and social data. Proponents of the heterogamy theory, that marital success is enhanced by dissimilarity, have found some supportive data for some personality traits. Neither theory is comprehensive; statements about the benefits of similarity and dissimilarity must be qualified by specific references to factors.

The whole area of personality traits and marital success needs further study. Some traits in and of themselves seem to support marital success; others are a detriment. Some traits are more beneficial in the presence of identical traits; others are more enhancing when complemented by their opposite. Whether the first or second description is true of a trait may depend on the presence of a third trait. The complex nature of this subject renders it difficult to study; to date results have been controversial.

One way to avoid the necessity of charting individual personality-trait combinations is the use of categories of persons with which distinct personality traits are associated. Birth-order positions may be such categories. A person's position among his/her siblings is of great influence on his/her personality because it is a major determinant of the situation in which he/she develops. Thus persons of identical birth order can be expected to possess similar personality characteristics. It may be possible, therefore, that some combinations of birth order are more conducive to marital success than others.



It is important for this study that the nature of the process by which birth order influences character formation be understood. Adler described it as a meaning-mediated process rather than a mechanistic one. Individuals are active agents who give meaning to all that they perceive, and who interact with what they perceive in terms of the meaning they assign to it. They organize their interpretations into a meaning structure, an integrated system. This structure allows individuals to understand, predict and control their experience (Adler, 1958; Mozak 1979). Adler calls this interrelated set of meanings a person's "life-style." It determines a person's characteristic way of responding, the manifestation of personality traits.

Meanings are organized in terms of the goal which unifies a person's activities. Common to all persons, according to Adler, is the striving for superiority, the gaining of individual worth. All individuals experience feelings of inferiority, inadequacy and insecurity during childhood because of their inability to do what others do. The universal goal is to overcome these unpleasant feelings by becoming superior (Adler, 1927).

The methods which the child chooses to pursue this goal depend on two factors: the child's givens and situation. The former consists of the child's abilities, physical condition and any biologically-based personality factors. The later consists of the child's material world, other people, and the other sex (Adler, 1927). It is the child's givens in interaction with the environment that form the context for self-understanding, that describe the limits within which the goal can be pursued, and that determine the nature of the specific methods chosen to obtain this goal. Thus the means chosen to attain superiority are

selected from among those available to children with their particular strengths and weaknesses, in their particular environment. It is these means that determine personality.

Personality formation has universally been thought to take place during the early years (Dager, 1964). Most of it takes place, therefore, within the confines of the family setting. Confirming its importance, Adler stated:

The position in the family leaves an indelible stamp upon the style of life. Every difficulty of development is caused by rivalry and lack of cooperation in the family (Adler, 1958, p. 154).

One major determinant of what methods are available to the child in the quest for superiority is position among siblings. For Adler this position is not constituted by birth rank per se but involves as well the family atmosphere (whether it be friendly or hostile to a child), the sex of the siblings, the spaces among them, the parenting abilities of the parents, and the presence of siblings with special characteristics. The term family constellation denotes the complete set of familial factors affecting the child.

Basing his descriptions on his own observations, Adler has provided remarkably accurate descriptions of the common factors operative in various birth-order positions and of the most common character traits that develop in response to these (1958, 1927). A common pattern in his description, with the exception of one, is that there are basically two opposite ways of responding to a set of circumstances. These different ways result in very different personality traits. The choice made is determined by the preference of the decision-maker himself. The descriptions are as follows:

1. The Oldest Child

On the one hand the oldest child enjoys the most favorable position because he/she begins in a position of superiority over against siblings. Moreover, parents entrust him/her with the most responsibility. On the other hand, he/she experiences the greatest jolt of all--the displacement by a rival from the position of being the sole recipient of all the parental attention. The reaction to the presence of a younger sibling can be one of cooperation, protectiveness and responsibility, or it can be one of hostility and the endeavor to regain the parents' attention through negative behavior.

2. The Second Child

The second child lives in the shadow of a pace-setter. He/she is constantly being outdone by the rival, the first child. A race-course attitude results; he/she strives under pressure for superiority. The reaction to this situation may be an all-out effort to catch up, or may be despair and the development of a constant feeling of being slighted and neglected.

3. The Youngest Child

The youngest child experiences no replacement by a younger sibling. For a youngest the parents and the siblings are usually most solicitous. He/she remains the smallest and the most helpless, but at the same time enjoys the most attention. One reaction to this situation is to lose all hope of success by one's own efforts and to avoid responsibility; the other reaction is to try all the more to surpass the older siblings and to become the most capable of all.

4. Only Child

This position is described as the most disadvantageous by Adler.

The only child is pampered, experiences no difficulties because these are always removed, and experiences value by virtue of receiving all the parental attention. Moreover, his/her parents are usually cautious, and view the world as a hostile place. For this position Adler notes only one reaction: that of depending on others, of letting others be responsible for one's well-being.

Adler considered these descriptions to be true only in a nomothetic sense. Their general nature is due to several factors. First, the situation of a birth-order position varies from family to family, depending on the parents' attitudes and abilities, the life-style choices of the siblings, and the cultural setting. Secondly, different children will respond differently to the same situation, because they will interpret it differently. Thirdly, there exists a variety of responses possible to the same interpretation of the same situation. Individuals are creative beings, who choose a certain course of action in response to the perceived setting in accordance with their own goals. For these reasons Adlerian theory points to only a weak correlation between birth order and personality traits. Research reviewed by Manaster (1970) supports that such a relation exists. Since this is so, a relationship between birth-order combinations and marital success becomes plausible.

This idea was developed and popularized by Toman. His more mechanistic view of human development allowed him to be more confident about whether personality characteristics can be predicted from birth-order positions than was Adler. Using interrelationships as his basic concept instead of life-style, he proposed the duplication theorem:

other things being equal, new social relationships

are more enduring and successful, the more they resemble the earlier and earliest (intrafamilial) social relationships of the persons involved (Toman, 1961, p. 80).

This theorem assumes that relationships experienced early in life will influence the expectations and tendencies with which later relationships are experienced. Moreover, it assumes that the reciprocity observable in sibling relationships is repeated in later relationships. One application of this theorem is the effect of sibling relationships on the marital relationship.

Toman spelled out this application in great detail. Persons, he claimed, seek to relate to their spouses in such a way that they provide the same behaviors and attitudes as they did in their family of origin, in the context of the same behaviors and attitudes as provided by their siblings. As one sibling complements the other in their mutual striving for recognition, so one spouse complements the other. Complementarity of persons is the fitting together of two different personalities where one provides what the other lacks. The perfect marriage is one in which the birth-order position of each spouse complements the other perfectly and, as a consequence, in which the spouses' methods used to gain recognition complement one another perfectly. Such a combination should be highly conducive to the achievement of marital success.

Complementarity of spouses, in Toman's analysis, is a function of both birth order and sex of sibling, and consists of that combination of birth order and sex of sibling which permits both spouses to relate to one another as they did to a sibling. Thus, for example, the union of an oldest brother of a youngest sister and a youngest sister

of an oldest brother is considered complementary. Non-complementarity consists of that combination of birth order and sex of siblings which does not permit both spouses to relate to one another as they did to their sibling; for example, the marriage of two oldest children who have same sex siblings is considered to have both rank and sex conflict and is considered non-complementary. Partial complementarity consists of that combination of birth order and sex of sibling in which exists incomplete complementarity either with regard to rank or to sex of one or both the spouses. Only children by these definitions are always involved in both a rank and sex conflict.

Various operational definitions of complementarity have been used in the research on this topic. Toman used two categories in his data reports: complete or partial complementarity and rank and/or sex conflicts. He also developed formulas for expressing the degree of sex conflict and rank conflict prevailing in a marriage. The rank conflict formula is a function of the difference in the number of senior siblings and junior siblings. The sex conflict formula is a function of the percentage of same sex siblings in a person's family. These formulas were used by Levinger and Sonnheim (1965). But as Birtchnell (1977) has pointed out, these formulas merely give the illusion of scientific precision and do not satisfy the requirements of Toman's theorem. Significant for this theorem is whether or not a person experienced an older or a younger sibling, not whether the number of older siblings exceeds the younger siblings. Similarly, significant is whether or not a person experienced a sibling of the opposite sex, not how many more siblings of one sex than the other are present.

Birtchnell's ranking of combinations along a continuum of

diminishing precision offers little improvement. This ranking takes into account extraneous sibling relationships which are considered to be contaminations of the spouse relationship. The duplication theorem, however, is not affected by the presence of sibling relationships other than the one replicated by the marriage. An exception here is the middle child who experiences both older and younger siblings and may be ambivalent in later relationships. Mendelsohn (1973) developed a reasonable scheme of eight (8) different combinations divided into four ranks of complementarity, distinguishing between sibling positions as older and younger: rank and sex complementary, rank complementary, sex complementary, and neither rank or sex complementary. The limitation of this scheme is that it fails to take into account middle and only children, positions with which characteristics distinct from either oldest or youngest are associated (Chapter 2).

It may be needlessly complex to use both birth order and sex of siblings as variables for determining complementarity. The hypothesis concerning the effect of birth order on personality development does not require that the sex of the siblings be taken into account. Adler's description of the conditions of the various positions are sex-neutral (1927, 1958). Whether an oldest brother has younger sisters or younger brothers does not change the fact that he is ahead of them in development or that they displaced him. Dropping the sex variable simplifies the ranking of combinations. Weller, Natan, and Hazi (1974) used birth order as the only variable to assess complementarity of spouses in a study which demonstrated a positive relationship with marital adjustment, significant at greater than the .001 level of confidence.

For these reasons, it is deemed sufficient for the present study to use birth rank only. When four categories of sibling position — oldest, middle, youngest, and only— are used, then ten possible combinations result:

1. Oldest and last
2. Oldest and middle
3. Middle and last
4. Oldest and only
5. Middle and only
6. Youngest and only
7. Middle and middle
8. Oldest and oldest
9. Youngest and youngest
10. Only and only

These ten combinations can be divided into the following three levels of complementarity:

1. Complementary combinations: Combinations 1, 2 and 3.
2. Partially complementary combinations: Combinations 4, 5, 6 and 7.
3. Non-complementary combinations: Combinations 8, 9 and 10.

The research on the effect of birth-order complementarity on marital success has used various dependent variables. What constitutes marital success? Toman (1961) used two separate indices; namely, continuation (i.e., not divorcing) and the number of children present. The latter index is unacceptable; one cannot assume that the number of children born to a couple is directly dependent on its marital success. The former index, continuation, has some plausibility but has been proven inadequate. Staying married does not necessarily indicate marital success; for example, low happiness is surprisingly often associated with marital stability (Hicks and Platt, 1970). The decision to stay married may be the result of other factors, such as the unavailability of satisfactory alternatives, the presence of cultural sanctions against divorce, personal expectations of marriage, personality factors,



and personal benefits from the marriage. The same erroneous assumption that "married" means "successfully married" is made by studies using so-called "normal" couples as manifestations of marital success over against "client" couples as failures, such as is done by Levinger and Sonnheim (1965).

Various other concepts to describe marital success have been used, all with subtle nuances of meaning and lacking precise definition. Frequently used is the concept of "happiness." Burgess said that "happiness is a nebulous and elusive affair, especially when one attempts to define it" (1936, page 741). It is a positive emotional state. Problems with this concept are the ambiguity of its source, its subjective nature, and the possible contamination of its report by social desirability. "Satisfaction" is a positive attitude based on the fulfillment of a person's demands or expectations. Although the same criticisms which apply to happiness apply to satisfaction, it is useful in some contexts, such as the measurement of changes in level of marital satisfaction in response to therapeutic intervention (Roach, 1981). Although the effect of social desirability and subjective differences should be relatively constant for the same subject and hence not affect a measure of change, the effect of fluctuations in mood would remain problematic.

A more adequate criterion for study of relative marital success in different groups is marital "adjustment." It can be defined as the achievement of a harmonious balance between the needs and strivings of the spouses. It is characterized by mutual satisfaction and the absence of conflict. Satisfaction reflects relatively subjective components; absence of conflict and accompanying harmony of behavior can be operationalized into relatively objective components. Marital adjustment

can reflect both the spouses' own evaluation of their marriage and an evaluation in terms of cultural standards. This comprehensiveness makes it the most useful concept of marital success for this study.

Two hypotheses can now be stated:

1. Complementary combinations of birth order in a marriage are associated with a higher degree of marital adjustment than partially complementary combinations.
2. Complementary and partially complementary combinations of birth order in a marriage are associated with a higher degree of marital adjustment than non-complementary combinations.

It is possible that role expectations are a confounding variable for the effects of complementarity on marital adjustment. Roles can be defined as "the sum total of the expected behaviors, normatively defined for a given position" (Dyer, 1962, p. 372). There are role expectations associated with the positions of husband and wife. Two studies have shown that marital success is directly related to how well a partner's performance reflects the other's expectations (Dyer, 1962; Ort, 1950). Performance of roles can be expected to depend on the compatibility of a personality with the role. Since marital success has been found to be a function of role performance, it may also be a function of the spouses' compatibility with their specific roles.

The relationship between compatibility with role expectations and stability of a dyad was investigated by Bermann (1966) using same sex dyads. He found that stability was positively associated with compatibility of dyad members with their roles, which were defined by their group membership and which were identical. It may not be valid to generalize these results to the marriage relationship, which consists of complementary roles, Winch (1967) notwithstanding.

The traditional type of marriage assigned to the husband the

dominant, instrumental, task-oriented role and to the wife the subordinate, socio-emotional, integrative role. Under this division, spouses expect to have the following complementary needs satisfied: the wife her needs for security, vicariousness, achievement, and dependence; the husband his needs for dominance, achievement, admiration and nurturance. Since birth-order positions are associated with distinct personality traits, it may be that different birth-order positions vary with regard to personality fit in these roles of marriage and, as a result, with regard to performance of these roles. Oldest siblings typically develop personality types which fit well in the traditional husband role. Youngest siblings typically fit well in the traditional wife role. It may be, therefore, that complementarity of birth order may be associated with greater marital adjustment when the birth-order positions involved coincide in their descriptions with the traditional roles of marriage. The following hypothesis can now be stated:

3. The marriage of an oldest brother with a later-born sister is associated with a higher degree of marital adjustment than the marriage of a later-born brother with an oldest sister.

These equally complementary combinations of birth order were compared for marital adjustment by Weller, Natan & Hazi (1974) and manifested only a small difference. It was suggested by the authors that since there exists greater equality of women in Israel than in the USA, there may be a greater difference in marital adjustment between these two combinations in the USA than was found in Israel.

The research to date on the effect of Toman's duplication theorem (1961) is inconclusive. (This will be demonstrated in Chapter 2.) It was the purpose of this study to obtain more data. The relationship between birth-order complementarity of spouses and their marital

adjustment was investigated. The rationale for predicting a positive relationship was based on the following assumptions: (1) birth-order position affects character and (2) some combinations of character are more beneficial for marital adjustment than others. The division of birth-order combinations into three levels of complementarity was used to measure the independent variable, complementarity of birth-order position. A paper and pencil test of marital adjustment (Spanier, 1976) was used to measure the dependent variable, marital adjustment.

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. Complementary combinations of birth-order in a marriage are not associated with a higher degree of marital adjustment than partially complementary combinations.
2. Complementary and partially complementary combinations of birth-order in a marriage are not associated with a higher degree of marital adjustment than non-complementary combinations.
3. The marriage of an oldest brother with a later-born sister is not associated with a higher degree of marital adjustment than the marriage of a later-born brother with an oldest sister.

The purpose of this study was the exploration of the validity of the duplication theorem proposed by Toman (1961). This study was designed to test the significance of birth-order complementarity as a factor influencing marital adjustment. The significance of birth-order complementarity should be of interest to marital partners, who stand to benefit most from any increase in understanding of their relationship. This significance should be of interest to parents who have such high stakes in their child's marital success. Finally, this significance should be of interest to text-book writers who with only one exception (Lasswell, 1982) have failed to note this factor as a possible predictor of marital success.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature pertinent to this study can be organized under the following headings:

1. Marital Adjustment
2. Birth Order
3. Birth Order and Marital Adjustment

Review of the research on marital adjustment delimits the factors of influence on marital adjustment for which the three groups in the present study were to be matched. The literature on birth order indicates whether the assumption that birth order influences personality is valid. The literature on birth order and marital adjustment provides information about past findings related to the present study's hypotheses. These three subject areas are reviewed in the order listed above.

#### Marital Adjustment

There are several problems in design and measurement in this area which should be noted. One major problem is the lack of conceptual consensus with reference to marital success. The several concepts used are not synonymous nor are they equally useful, as was pointed out in Chapter 1. Another problem area is that of sampling. In some cases samples were too small. In most cases only one spouse was consulted. Whether this is problematic, as Ortig (1981) claims, depends on whether the evaluation of a marriage varies significantly between spouses.

There seems to be very little evidence on the subject. A third problem is that of inadequate measuring instruments; relatively few have established reliability and validity (Spanier, 1976; Roach, 1981). These problems have been one reason why the great proliferation of studies during the last few decades has failed to produce a uniform and integrated body of knowledge about marital success.

In spite of the methodological and conceptual problems noted, there are some factors for which the literature consistently indicates an influence on marital success. For other factors the evidence remains inconclusive. A summary of the major findings which were deemed most relevant for this study follows.

1. Social Factors

- a. Age at marriage

A positive relationship between age at marriage and marital success seems to exist: marital success improves with increasing age up to the late twenties, after which it levels off. Stephens (1968) reviewed eleven studies which all agree on the positive relationship. The same was true for studies by Glick and Norton (1971), Lasswell (1974), and by Lee (1977). The latter suggested that age as a variable is confounded by the father's occupation and wife's education. In 1978 Glenn and Weaver found no relationship between marital happiness and age at marriage in a national survey study. This result may have been due to the increased tendency of young people to end unsatisfactory marriages in divorce, thus becoming unavailable for marital satisfaction surveys, as the authors suggested. It may also have been due to the insensitivity of the single question index of marital satisfaction used. All studies except this one substantiated a positive relationship.

#### b. Socioeconomic Status of the Couple

The effects of various indices of socioeconomic status on marital success have been studied. Stephens (1968) reported that the higher the social class and the higher the level of education, the better the marriage. This was supported by Glick and Norton (1971) with respect to income and divorce. Glenn (1978) found only a slight relationship between only the wife's happiness and the socioeconomic class of the couple. Brinkerhoff and White (1978) found that only in economically marginal families did socioeconomic factors influence marital satisfaction. Socioeconomic variables seem to influence marital success, but this relationship may not be uniform for both spouses, nor for all socioeconomic levels, nor for all specific indices.

#### c. Race

Several studies have shown that race is a significant variable for marital success. In 1970 Hicks and Platt reported studies which showed that white people demonstrate greater stability in marriage than do blacks; whether this is still true today is not known.

#### d. Duration of Marriage

Studies prior to 1960 consistently showed a decline in marital satisfaction over time (Hicks and Platt, 1970). More recent research has focused on patterns of change in marital satisfaction as the family proceeds through its life-cycle. Some significant findings follow: the period before children arrive is characterized by higher satisfaction; the period after the children arrive by lower satisfaction, as is the period after the children leave; the retirement period is characterized by an increase in satisfaction to former levels (Hicks and Platt, 1970; Glenn and Weaver, 1978). One major limitation of most

research in this area is the poor basis for inferring duration effects that cross-sectional data provides. Such data confounds cohort effects with duration effects (Glenn and Weaver, 1978). Another complication is that the husband's and the wife's satisfaction does not necessarily co-vary over time (Hicks and Platt, 1970; Glenn and Weaver, 1978). That duration of marriage has some effect seems to be true. How much, when, and on whom has not yet been precisely determined.

e. Presence of Children

Most recent studies demonstrated that the presence of children had a detrimental effect on marital satisfaction (Hicks and Platt, 1970). However, Glenn and Weaver (1978) narrowed this effect down to the presence of children under six. It seems that, contrary to popular expectation, children have a deleterious effect on marital success -- most clearly while they are of pre-school age.

f. Religion

Similarity of faith seems to enhance marriage. Stephens (1968) reported that nine studies demonstrated higher divorce rates for marriages of mixed faith than for those of the same faith (faith being categorized as Jewish, Protestant and Catholic). This finding is supported by Landis (1949) for Catholics and Protestants. However, contrary evidence was produced by Burchinal and Chancellor (1963), who found no difference in the survival rates of same-faith and mixed-faith marriages. This finding may indicate that the importance of this factor may be decreasing.

Being religious enhances marital success. Both older studies (Stephens, 1968) and more recent studies (Glenn and Weaver, 1978) substantiated this relationship.



#### g. Occupational Status of the Wife

Common thought has been that a wife puts extra strain on her marriage by being employed outside the home. However, the relationship of the occupational status of the wife to marital adjustment is complex. Whether or not the wife is employed because of financial necessity has been shown to be an intervening variable (Orden and Bradburn, 1959). Full-time employment seems to have a greater detrimental effect than part-time employment (Hicks and Platt, 1970 ; Glenn and Weaver, 1978). A study by Staines and Pleck (1978) showed no ill effects from employment except in the case of mothers of pre-school children, and in the case of wives with less than a high school diploma. Glenn and Weaver (1978) found no relationship between employment of the wife and marital adjustment, perhaps because they did not take into account the above-mentioned interacting factors. Locksley (1980) also reported that the wife's employment had no influence on marital adjustment.

The frequency of employed wives has increased the last few decades; expectations and attitudes are changing. It may well be that the employed wife puts less strain on her marriage today than her counterpart did years ago. Whatever the case, a global negative effect can no longer be supported. The effect of the occupational status of the wife depends on several other variables.

#### 2. Personality Factors

Personality characteristics have been shown to be influential both taken by themselves and in combination. Individual characteristics were first studied. It was established by Terman (1938) that childhood background, known to be influential in determining personality, was a crucial factor in the determination of marital success. Not surprisingly,

several studies showed neuroticism in one of the partners to be positively related to marital dissatisfaction; these are reviewed by Barry (1970). Marital success has been shown to be supported by desirable social characteristics. On the basis of several studies, including Terman's, Barry (1970) reported that being emotionally stable, considerate of others, yielding, companionable, self-confident and emotionally dependent are all decisive in differentiating the happy from the unhappy marriages. In addition, several studies isolated adaptability and flexibility as being conducive to marital success (Hicks and Platt, 1970); the same is true of sociability (Stephens, 1968). Cole, Cole and Dean (1980) confirmed these findings when they showed that emotional maturity, a constellation of desirable personality factors, is an important variable in marital adjustment. If some birth-order positions are associated with more desirable personality characteristics, then the above findings may explain why some birth-order positions are associated with greater marital success than others. This will be discussed in the next section.

One important finding in this area is that the personality characteristics of the husband are more important for the marital satisfaction of both spouses than are the wife's (Barry, 1970). It may be that the characteristics of the husband's role in most marriages explain this finding.

Research on personality factors in combination, the so-called 'team' factor, is based on the assumption that it takes not just two good personalities but two good personalities which fit well to make a successful marriage. Whether such a fit consists of a union of similar or dissimilar personalities continues to be debated. Proponents of the

homogamy theory have enjoyed the most empirical success. Tharp (1964) reported that the generalization "homogamy-with-respect-to-personality-traits" is drawn by all the classic investigators. However, this conclusion must be questioned because typically the traits which were studied were those which were conducive to good social skills. Since such traits present in one individual support marital success, they should certainly do so when present in both individuals. Two recent studies not subject to this criticism point to the same conclusion, however. Pascal (1974) used the Edwards Preference Schedule and found that marital adjustment correlated to a greater degree with need similarity than with dissimilarity. Barry (1970) lists studies supporting homogamy with respect to personality and points out its importance for assuring value consensus.

A recent study by Doherty (1981) of the effects of locus of control differences also supported the homogamy theory. This cognitive characteristic has been defined as "a generalized expectancy or belief that one's outcomes are more under personal control (internal) or more under the control of external forces such as luck, fate or powerful forces (external)" (Doherty, 1981, p. 370). He found that the combinations of an external wife with an internal husband was associated with high levels of marital dissatisfaction.

Proponents of the heterogamy theory have fared less well. Its plausibility stems from the complementary nature of the two marital roles: two sets of expectations which each provide different functions to form a satisfactory unit of interaction. Different functions require different personality characteristics for optimum performance. The most notable research on this approach is that of Winch (1967). He hypothesized

that individuals tend to select a mate who shows the greatest promise of providing him or her with maximum need gratification. Winch conceived of need as a condition which could be met only by its opposite; e.g., dominance versus submission, nurturance versus receptiveness, achievement versus vicariousness. He defined need complementarity as either one spouse being high and the other being low on the same need (Type I) or as one spouse having an opposite need than the other (Type II). Winch's results supported his hypothesis only slightly, and subsequent efforts to replicate these have failed (Murstein, 1961; Tharp 1963; other studies reported by Winch, 1967). Furthermore, criticisms focusing on the sample, rater subjectivity, statistical procedures, and the actual significance of the results of Winch's study have been substantial (Tharp, 1963; Winch, 1967).

Thus to date there seems to be no established evidence that certain combinations of different personalities are conducive to marital success. This does not bode well for the birth-order heterogamy hypothesis. Yet the idea that complementarity of certain personality traits is beneficial in marriage remains plausible. If in the present study the hypotheses concerning the complementarity of birth order are supported, then further study in this area would seem warranted.

#### Birth Order

It was reported by Manaster in 1977 that after reading 75 articles and manuscripts on birth order, perusing bibliographies which cite over 600 articles on birth order, and reading three books on the subject, he concluded that "the mass of empirical data collected on birth order over the century may be seen as validating the general notion underlying the Adlerian family constellation construct and the specific description

of birth-order positions as represented by Adler" (p. 1). This statement is necessarily general because findings have been inconsistent. One scholar found them to be so inconsistent that he deemed the search for positive findings to be hopeless (Schooler, 1972). This inconsistency may be due in part to the indirect nature of birth order as a variable, which should cause us to expect low correlations only, as pointed out above. In addition, there have been criticisms concerning the research methods used in many of these studies.

One problem has been the lack of theoretical consensus. Both Kammeyer (1967) and Schooler (1972), in reviews of the literature, found that most of the research was ad hoc. Researchers, essentially interested in other subjects, were finding serendipitous results and giving these the most plausible explanation which occurred to them. There has been little theoretical consensus among those studies which used theory; theories have varied greatly, ranging from economic and physical to interactional theory.

A second problem has been the lack of conceptual precision. Frequently researchers have failed to distinguish among various levels of abstraction. Kammeyer (1967) pointed out that researchers often confuse levels of abstraction, confuse cause and effect, and combine causes which are at different levels of causation.

A third problem has been faulty research design. The most devastating criticism concerns the failure to take into account cohort differences. Schooler (1972) pointed out that findings of uneven representation of various ordinal positions in specific subpopulations could be accounted for by cohort differences in the number of new families being started and in changing patterns of family size. The other criticisms

have concerned lack of adequate control for such confounding variables as spacing, family size, and the sex of siblings (Schooler, 1972; Adams, 1972).

During the last few years some of these problems have been alleviated. Birth-order research continues to abound and significant results can be identified in some areas. Below are presented the characteristics which have been found to be associated with various birth-order positions. These traits were taken from articles which reviewed the literature on birth-order and personality (Adams, 1972; Manaster, 1977). Only those findings made since 1977, the date of the most recent review article, which seemed especially important were added. Findings which have not been replicated and which have been contradicted are omitted.

1. First-born:

- a. higher achievement and higher intellectual development (Belmont, 1977; Breland, 1973; Adams, 1972; Adams lists seven studies).
- b. higher in self-esteem (Kidwell, 1982; Falbo, 1980).
- c. more competitive than last-born (Falbo, 1980).
- d. higher aspiration than later born (Falbo, 1980).
- e. more dependent (Adams, 1972. He lists 4 studies).
- f. more conforming (Adams, 1972).
- g. more responsible (Adams, 1972. He lists 2 studies).
- h. more affiliative (Adams, 1972. He lists 3 studies). This finding was refined by Chapman and Speck (1977), who found that first-borns tend to be more affiliative only under anxiety-invoking conditions.
- i. male first-borns are more likely to be maladjusted than later-borns. Adams (1972) lists six confirming studies and Croake and Olson (1977) found that first-borns scored higher on most MMPI scales than middle-borns.
- j. oldest sons are disproportionately highly represented among American presidents.
- k. less popular among grade-school children (Miller and Maruyama, 1976).

2. Middle-born:

- a. shows least maladjustment of all birth-order positions (Adams, 1972).

- b. is more competitive than last-born, less than first-born (Falbo, 1980).
  - c. shows lowest self-esteem of all positions (Kidwell, 1981; Falbo, 1980).
  - d. more popular than first-born or only children (Miller and Maruyama, 1976).
  - e. lower educational achievement and lower intellectual development than first and only children (Belmont, 1977; Breland, 1973; Adams, 1972).
  - f. more independent than first-born (Adams, 1972).
  - g. less conforming than first-born (Adams, 1972).
  - h. less responsible than first-born (Adams, 1972).
3. Last-born:
- a. least capable intellectually (Belmont, 1977).
  - b. less competitive than first or middle-born (Falbo, 1980).
  - c. lower in aspiration than first (Falbo, 1980).
  - d. higher self-esteem than middle-born (Kidwell, 1981).
  - e. greater tendency to be alcoholic than any other birth-order position (Barry and Blaine, 1977).
  - f. as likely as oldest to manifest maladjustment (Croake and Olsen, 1977). Adams (1972) cited several studies which point this to be true for females. Belmont (1977) indicated that youngest children are more likely to be maladjusted than first-borns.
  - g. most popular among grade school children (Miller and Maruyama, 1976).
4. Only Children:
- a. higher intellectual capacity than middle and last-born but less than first-born in small families (Falbo, 1977).
  - b. higher educational achievement than middle-borns (Adams, 1972).
  - c. stronger internal locus of control (Falbo, 1980).
  - d. higher on self-centeredness (Falbo, 1980).
  - e. higher aspiration than later-born (Falbo, 1980).
  - f. no evidence for higher maladjustment (Falbo, 1980). However, they were found to score higher on most MMPI scales than middle and later-born (Croake and Olson, 1977).
  - g. less popular among school children than middle and last-born (Miller and Maruyama, 1976).

Some patterns emerge in these descriptions. First-born children are most equipped for vocational success. They possess high motivation, high intellectual ability, and high social conformity. Middle-born

children are lower on each of these qualities than first-born and possess the lowest self-esteem of all. This is combined with the best adjustment and the greatest popularity. Last-born children are least equipped for vocational success, but enjoy high self-esteem and popularity. This combination seems to result in the highest rate of maladjustment. Only children resemble first-born in being well-equipped for vocational success, but get along with others less well.

These patterns support the Adlerian contention that certain qualities of personality are associated with different birth-order positions. Only in a general way do they corroborate his descriptions of the positions. Some of the findings may explain why some birth-order positions seem more conducive to marital success than others (see next section). Missing in these descriptions are the kind of personality traits which lend themselves to conceptualization as part of a complementary pair, such as submissiveness and dominance. Research on such traits would be more pertinent to the present study.

#### Birth Order and Marital Adjustment

Studies on the effects of birth order on the romantic pair have focused on dating, mate-selection, and marital success. The independent variable has variously been the birth order of one partner, the combination of birth orders of the two partners, and the complementarity of the combinations of the birth order of the two partners. Findings on dating and marital success have been inconsistent. The data for mate-selection have consistently shown no relationship.

In an early study, Burgess (1939) investigated the effect of birth order of one of the spouses on the success of a marriage. He reports



little relationship between birth order and marital happiness except in the case of the only child, whose chances for marital happiness seem considerably lower than those of the others. When he studied the effects of birth order as occurring in various combinations, he found more effects: the greatest percent of very happy marriages occurred among unions of two oldest and the lowest percent among unions of two only children, two youngest, and of an only and a youngest. These results which support neither a homogamy nor a heterogamy, and which are not related to the complementarity variable, seem to demonstrate only that some birth-order positions produce persons with a greater potential for marital success than others, and that doubling this effect as in the combination of two oldest is best of all. These findings corroborate that some personality characteristics are more associated with marital success than others. This effect may operate as a confounding variable in studies of the effect of complementary birth order on marital success.

One other study examined the relationship of the birth order of one spouse with marital success, and did so separately for men and women. Hall (1965) assumed a traditional division of marital power and responsibility and hypothesized that birth-order position enhances marital success if it affords experiences similar to the marital role. This was supported by his findings that men who are only children have high divorce rates while women who are only children do not, that oldest men have low rates while oldest women have high rates, and both youngest men and youngest women have high rates. These findings support the reasoning which led to our third hypothesis.

A much different approach was followed by Toman (1961). Ignoring possible differences of fit of birth-order positions with the two marital roles, he focused on the fit of the two birth-order positions with each other. The duplication theorem led him to predict that the better the fit of the two positions, the more successful the marriage. Two studies by Toman (1961), a study by Kemper (1966) on related factors, and nine other studies have investigated the empirical validity of the theorem. Significant results have been both pro and con. The varying operational definitions of complementarity and of marital success which have been noted earlier pose major problems for comparison.

Two of the studies mentioned focused on the dyadic success of dating couples. Mendelsohn (1974) compared heterosexual dating couples for rank complementarity, sex complementarity, and both rank and sex complementarity, and found that complementarity was associated with greater success in the dating relationship. This was true to the greatest degree for rank and sex complementarity together, and least for sex complementarity only. Least successful dating partners were those who possessed neither sort of complementarity. By contrast, Critelli and Baldwin (1979) found complementarity not to be a significant variable for dating attraction or stability.

Three studies focused on mate-selection and produced uniformly negative results: people are not more likely to select a spouse who is complementary by birth order than one who is not. Kemper (1966) found this to be so. Ward (1974) found support for the homogamy theory with respect to these variables. Ward's study was flawed by its restriction to only two birth-order categories: first (including only) and later-born. The same results were found in a third study by Birtchnell and

Mayhew (1977). In addition, Toman's statistics of 2300 families show that non-complementary unions are more frequent than complementary unions (1961). It seems safe to conclude that people do not have a greater tendency to select mates of complementary birth-order position than of non-complementary position.

This conclusion about mate-selection does not indicate whether complementarity of birth order in a marriage promotes marital success or not. The latter subject was the focus of seven investigations; three failed to show a positive effect, while four succeeded in doing so.

All three studies which fail to support the theorem possess serious flaws. That of Pinsky (1974) had limitations both of sample (only 40 couples) and of instruments (according to Pinsky). The study by Lvinger and Sonnheim (1965) used a faulty measure of marital satisfaction: parents of elementary school children. In addition, they used relative measures of seniority and of juniority of birth-order position. Such measures introduce irrelevant data, as was pointed out in Chapter 1. The third study by Birtchnell and Mayhew (1977) used enough subjects, 1994, but used a very limited index of success--three degrees of success as reported by the subject--and used an inappropriate index of complementarity. They distinguished subjects not merely by complementarity of their position, but also by the complementarity of the siblings of each. Whether complementarity is increased by the presence of such complementary siblings seems doubtful. For example, an older brother of a younger sister is just as complementary to a wife who has an older brother or to a wife who has three older brothers as is an older brother with three younger sisters.

Some of the positive studies have problems too. Toman (1961)

conducted two such studies. In the first he used an extremely limited sample of 32 couples. Moreover, he used stability as an index of marital success, which is an inaccurate index (see Chapter 1). The strikingly positive results which he obtained in this first study - 94% of 16 divorced couples were non-complementary as compared to 25% of married couples--have not been duplicated. In Toman's second study in which he compared 108 divorced couples with 2192 married couples, he found that 26% of divorced couples were complementary while 40% of married couples were complementary.

A study by Kemper (1966) combined a power analysis of marriage with sibling variables and showed positive results: (1) oldest men who marry a younger sister of brother(s) are more satisfied than later-born men with older sisters who marry a woman with younger brothers; (2) older brothers are more satisfied with younger sisters than middle brothers are; (3) youngest brothers are more satisfied with oldest sisters than with middle sisters. Result 1 supports the third hypothesis of this study; results 2 and 3 seem to support two specific instances of complementarity.

Finally, the study by Weller, Natan, and Hazi (1974) compares the reported marital happiness of 258 Israeli wives with the birth-order complementarity of these wives with their spouses. All possible combinations were ranked in order of complementarity and likelihood of marital happiness, with the exception of the combination of an only child with a later born:

1. first born male to later born female
2. first born female to later born male
3. one or both the partners is middle born
4. only child male and first born female
5. only child female and first born male
6. first born male and first born female

7. later born male and later born female
8. only child male and only child female

The authors found that these rankings were associated with decreasing marital adjustment, a finding also supported when the rankings were divided into three groups: complementary (1, 2 and 3), partially complementary (4), and non-complementary (5, 6, 7 and 8). These findings were significant at greater than the .001 level of confidence. One problem with this study is that the authors use the words "happiness," "satisfaction" and "adjustment" seemingly interchangeably. This may be a result of their measuring instrument. It consisted of one question on satisfaction, one on happiness, one on contemplation of separation, and six on arguments. The creators of this instrument, Nye and Macdougall (1959), offer it as an initial attempt to develop a marital adjustment scale. It will be of interest to determine whether the results of this study can be replicated using a more sophisticated instrument measuring marital adjustment, and using subjects in a different culture.

In conclusion, the evidence is not sufficient to determine the fate of Toman's theorem. The flaws in method and design of some studies and the paucity of good studies indicate a need for further study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD

#### Subjects

A total of 354 married women agreed to serve as subjects. They were obtained from various sources within Bowling Green, Kentucky (population: 50,000). The majority were Western Kentucky University employees at all levels of position, and the remainder were members of church groups, a civic group, vocational school students, elementary and secondary school teachers, and city hall employees (Table 1).

Subjects came from a wide range of occupations: professional (37%), secretarial (24.5%), housewife (16%), skilled (6%), unskilled (6%), commercial (5%), student (5%) and retired (.5%). Mean number of children for subjects was 1.56, with a range of zero to six children. Most were in their first marriage (88%), few were in their second (11.5%) and fewest were in their third or more marriage (.5%). The mean number of years subjects had been married was 15.13 years, with a range from 1 to 47 years. Age at marriage for subjects and their spouses varied from 16 to 64 years. At least one spouse was under 20 years old at the time of marriage in 24% of the couples. The difference in ages between spouses varied from 0 to 30 years; 6% of the couples had an age difference in excess of 10 years. When asked to indicate their faith as Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or other, for themselves and their spouses, 91% indicated the same faith for themselves and their spouses. Combined

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<sup>1</sup>Occupation represented by these categories are listed in Appendix A.

Table 1

## Sources of Subjects

Source	Number	Percentage
Western Kentucky Employees	185	52
Junior Women's Club	40	11
Presbyterian Church	34	10
Western Kentucky Extension Classes	28	8
School Staffs	28	8
Vocational School Students	25	7
City Hall Employees	14	4
TOTAL	354	100

income was not always indicated by subjects; those who did indicated a range from \$2,000 to over \$100,000, and 10% indicated combined income of less than \$20,000.

#### Measuring Instrument

Each subject was given a questionnaire which consisted of questions pertaining to personal information and to marital adjustment (Appendix B). The questions about personal information referred to occupation of self and of spouse, schooling of self and of spouse, number of marriages, combined annual income, duration of marriage, ages at marriage, faith of self and of spouse, number of children, the siblings of self and of spouse, and the marital status of parents of self and of spouse. The marital adjustment questions were those which comprise the Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale (1976).

The Spanier Dyadic Adjustment Scale was designed by its author to be applicable to both married and unmarried couples. Spanier defined marital adjustment as a process which could be measured meaningfully by evaluating the relationship at a given point in time. The outcome of marital adjustment, he suggested, is determined by the degree of 1. troublesome dyadic differences, 2. interpersonal tensions and personal anxiety, 3. dyadic satisfaction, 4. dyadic cohesion, and 5. consensus on matters of importance to dyadic functioning. Spanier comprehensively used items from existing marital scales and sophisticated statistical techniques in order to select the best items. The resulting scale of 32 items was found to measure four separate factors. These were not defined by Spanier and the following definitions were inferred from the items assigned to each factor:

1. Dyadic consensus: a state of agreement about areas of



importance such as finances, recreation, religious matters, goals, and household tasks.

2. Affectional expression: agreement about and contentment with the exercise of demonstrating positive regard.
3. Dyadic satisfaction: a state of contentment with regard to the relationship, manifested both by subjective evaluation and the report of the absence of conflict behavior.
4. Dyadic cohesion: the friendship aspect of the relationship, the extent of shared activities and interests.

It is Spanier's contention that these four factors together give a sufficient indication of dyadic adjustment.

Criterion-related validity was demonstrated by comparing the responses of married and divorced couples; these were found to be different at the  $p < .001$  level of confidence. Construct validity was demonstrated by a correlation of .86 for married respondents between responses to the Spanier scale and to the Lock-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale (1959). Using Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha (1951) to estimate reliability, the author found the total reliability to be .96.

#### Procedure

About half of the subjects were obtained by means of a mailing; the other half were obtained in face-to-face settings. A cover letter with a questionnaire (Appendix B) and a self-addressed campus mail envelope were mailed to all female employees listed with a spouse's name in the Western Kentucky University faculty-student directory, 338 in all. The return for the mailing was 185 questionnaires (55%).

For the face-to-face settings a cover sheet was attached to the questionnaire (Appendix B). Its content was similar to that of the cover letter and served to reinforce the verbal explanations given. Subjects required from 10 to 20 minutes to fill out the entire questionnaire. A total of 169 questionnaires were filled out in these settings.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

Marital adjustment was not found to vary with complementarity of birth-order positions. Nor was marital adjustment found to vary significantly with the hypothetical similarity of birth-order combination to traditional marital roles.

Of the 354 responses, 327 were usable (6 were returned too late for inclusion, 5 reported a marriage of less than a year's duration, and 16 were incomplete). From the sibling information on the questionnaires, subjects and their husbands were categorized as oldest, middle, youngest, and only. Subjects were then divided into the 10 groups which represent all possible combinations of the four birth-order positions:

1. oldest and youngest
2. oldest and middle
3. middle and youngest
4. oldest and only
5. middle and only
6. youngest and only
7. middle and middle
8. oldest and oldest
9. youngest and youngest
10. only and only

All except three of these groups had a sufficient number of subjects for statistical purposes; groups 6 (youngest and oldest), 9 (youngest and youngest), and 10 (only and only) had 15 or fewer subjects.

The ten groups were relatively-well matched in terms of the extraneous factors which were thought to be of possible influence on

marital adjustment. Table 2 lists the following statistics for each group: mean number of children; mean duration of marriage; percentage of first, second, or more marriage; percentage marriages of which at least one spouse was under 20 years old at the time of marriage; the percentage of marriages with a greater than 10 years difference; the percentage reporting the same faith; and the percentage reporting less than \$20,000 in combined income.

Answers to the items of the Spanier Scale were summed in accordance with the values assigned to each possible answer. For the small percentage of questionnaires in which the subject had omitted to answer one or two questions, the subject's mean score on the remaining items was assigned to the omitted items. The highest possible score for the scale was 151 points. The mean score for the entire sample of 327 subjects was 111.60, with a range from 149 to 48, and a standard deviation of 19.6. Mean scores, standard deviations and ranges for each of the 10 combinations of birth order are listed in Table 3. All the means, with the exception of that of group 10, which was too small to have a meaningful mean, cluster closely about the overall mean. The analysis of variance indicated no significant differences between groups,  $F(9, 317) = .42, p > .05$ .

#### Birth-Order Complementarity

The ten groups of birth-order combinations were collapsed into three levels of complementarity:

- A. Complementary by birth order
  - 1. oldest and youngest
  - 2. oldest and middle
  - 3. middle and youngest

Table 2

Characteristics of Subjects by Birth-Order Combination

Combination	n	Mean number of children	Mean duration of marriage in years	% in first marriage	% having at least one spouse under 20 years at marriage	% having 10 yrs or more difference in ages	% reporting same faith	% earning less than \$20,000
1. Oldest and youngest	54	1.48	16.17	91	20	4	93	5.5
2. Oldest and middle	46	1.63	13.65	83	22	4	85	17
3. Middle and younger	65	1.65	16.28	94	25	9	97	9
4. Oldest and only	28	1.61	15.28	82	25	1	93	7
5. Middle and only	27	1.67	17.74	93	22	11	100	0
6. Youngest and only	14	.79	9.2	79	36	7	86	21
7. Middle and middle	39	1.72	14.08	82	28	5	79	13
8. Oldest and oldest	35	1.43	12.8	94	23	3	97	17
9. Youngest and youngest	15	1.67	18.27	87	13	13	93	7
10. Only and only	4	1.25	20.25	50	25	0	50	0
All Subjects	327	1.56	15.3	88	24	6	91	10

Table 3 Birth-Order Combinations and Marital Adjustment

Birth-Order Combination	Mean	Number	Standard Deviation	Range
1. Oldest and Youngest	112.78	54	14.11	113 to 67
2. Oldest and Middle	114.40	46	19.14	149 to 64
3. Middle and Youngest	112.58	65	15.49	143 to 71
4. Oldest and Only	112.11	28	19.2	147 to 68
5. Middle and Only	115.13	27	13.65	139 to 86
6. Youngest and Only	110.57	14	23.17	146 to 63
7. Middle and Middle	108.38	39	14.0	134 to 61
8. Oldest and Oldest	112.08	35	14.56	141 to 76
9. Youngest and Youngest	106.67	15	21.68	137 to 63
10. Only and Only	98.50	4	106.22	119 to 48
All Subjects	111.60	327	19.6	149 to 48

- B. Partially complementary by birth order
  - 4. oldest and only
  - 5. middle and only
  - 6. youngest and only
  - 7. middle and middle
- C. Non-complementary by birth order
  - 8. oldest and oldest
  - 9. youngest and youngest
  - 10. only and only

The number of subjects, the mean, the standard deviation and the range of the marital adjustment scores for each level are listed in Table 4. The means are very similar: 112.32, 112.35, and 109.20. The present study thus failed to provide a basis for rejecting the first two null hypotheses. It can therefore be concluded that complementary combinations of birth-order position in a marriage are not associated with a higher degree of marital adjustments than partially complementary combinations, nor are complementary and partially complementary combinations associated with a higher degree of marital adjustments than non-complementary combinations.

#### Hypothetical Similarity of Birth-Order Combination to Traditional Marital Roles

The third null hypothesis concerned the effect of hypothetical similarity of birth-order combination to traditional marital roles. Group one (oldest and middle) and group two (oldest and youngest) were combined and divided according to whether the husband or the wife was the oldest:

- a. Similar to traditional roles: husband is oldest and wife is later-born.
- b. Dissimilar to traditional roles: husband is later-born and wife is oldest.

The means of the two groups showed an unexpected variation: the mean of group a (husband is oldest) was 108.92, whereas the mean of group b (wife is oldest) was 115.12 (Table 5). However, when a two-tailed t

Table 4    Complementarity of Birth-Order Position  
and Marital Adjustment

Level of Complementarity	Mean	Number	Standard Deviation	Range
Complementary (Groups 1,2, and 3)	112.32	165	16.11	149 to 64
Partially Complementary (Groups 4,5,6 and 7)	112.35	108	16.61	147 to 61
Non-complementary (Groups 8,9, and 10)	109.20	54	30.22	141 to 48

Table 5    Combinations of First-born and Later-born  
Divided by which Spouse is Firstborn, and  
Marital Adjustment

	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Husband is oldest and wife is later-born	48	108.92	16.61
Husband is later-born and wife is oldest	52	115.12	16.00



test was applied, the difference was shown to be not significant,  $t(98) = 1.896, p < .10$ .

In order to investigate if the above variation was a recurrent pattern, group three (middle and youngest) was divided with respect to the same type of distinction. According to the duplication theorem (Toman, 1961), the youngest will relate to the middle child as to an older sibling and the middle child relates to the youngest as to a younger sibling. Thus the same senior-junior relationship could occur as with the combinations of oldest with later-born. Group 3, middle and youngest, accordingly was divided into two subgroups, the first comprised of those couples in which the husband was middle-born and the second in which the husband was youngest-born. The direction of the difference between the means was the same as that found for the oldest and later-born combinations: the couples in which the husband had the more senior position by birth-order position had a lower mean score, 106.25, than those couples in which the husband had the more junior position, who had a mean score of 115.81 (Table 6). When a two-tailed  $t$  test was applied, the difference was shown to be significant,  $t(63) = 2.19, p < .05$ . Thus the same pattern found with respect to combinations of oldest and later-born was found also with respect to combinations of middle and youngest: couples who are dissimilar to the traditional-role division by birth order possess greater marital adjustment than those who are similar.

#### Sex Complementarity of Siblings

It was decided to reexamine the data with regard to the sex complementarity of siblings of the spouses. All of Toman's (1961) data were organized with respect to both birth order and sex-of-siblings

Table 6    Combination of Middle-born and Youngest  
            Divided by which Spouse is Middle-born,  
            and Marital Adjustment

	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Husband is middle-born and wife is youngest	22	106.25	14.49
Husband is youngest and wife is middle-born	43	115.81	15.49

complementarity. Perhaps his positive results were due to the inclusion of the latter variable.

Complementarity of sex of sibling can be conceptualized in two ways. The more strict definition specifies the existence of a sibling of the opposite sex who has the same birth-order position as the person's spouse. The less strict definition specifies the existence of one or more siblings of the opposite sex, regardless of position. The first definition can be applied to three groups, those which are complementary by birth-order (oldest and youngest, oldest and middle, and middle and youngest). Three levels of complementarity by sex of sibling can be conceptualized:

- A. Complementary. Both spouses have a sibling of the opposite sex in the same birth-order position as their spouse.
- B. Partially Complementary. Only one spouse has a sibling of the opposite sex in the same position as his or her spouse.
- C. Non-complementary. Neither spouse has siblings of the opposite sex in the same birth-order position as his or her spouse.

By the strict definition the combinations which are partially and non-complementary by birth order are non-complementary by sex of sibling. However, if we use the less strict definition of sibling-sex complementarity, then couples in these combinations can be at different levels of complementarity of sex of sibling. Group 4 (oldest and only), 5 (middle and only) and 6 (youngest and only) can be either partially complementary or non-complementary by sex of sibling. Group 7 (middle and middle), 8 (oldest and oldest), and 9 (youngest and youngest) can be any one of the three levels of complementarity by sex of sibling. Group 10 (only and only) can only be non-complementary by sex of sibling. Because of the conceptual impossibility of a complete factorial design of the two variables, a factorial analysis was ruled out.

Table 7 Complementarity of Birth Order by Complementarity  
of Sex of Sibling and Marital Adjustment

	Complementary by sex of sibling		Partially complementary by sex of sibling		Non-complementary by sex of sibling	
	Mean	Number	Mean	Number	Mean	Number
Complementary by birth order (groups 1,2, & 3)	A 112.62	76	B 114.79	67	C 104.15	20
Partially complementary by birth order (groups 4,5, & 6)	D Not Applicable		E 111.62	52	F 115.94	17
Non-complementary by birth order, including middle and middle (groups 7, 8, & 9)	G 111.68	49	H 108.12	34	I 111.00	10
Only and only (group 10)	J Not Applicable		K Not Applicable		L 98.5	4

Table 7 presents the mean scores of the cells which had subjects. The means are mostly similar if we disregard only and only (which lacked a meaningful number of subjects). The only meaningful exception is the difference between the means in the top row: couples who are complementary and partially complementary by birth-order position and by sex of sibling have a higher mean score than those couples who are complementary by birth order but non-complementary by sex of sibling. The difference between cell A (complementary by birth order and by sex of sibling) and cell C (complementary by birth order and non-complementary by sex of sibling) was statistically significant,  $t(94) = 1.97, p < .05$ .

No pattern of difference in marital adjustment scores with respect to complementarity of sex of sibling is evident in Table 7. If the significant factor for cell C is the absence of siblings complementary by sex, then we would expect the other two cells which represent no complementarity of sex of sibling (F and I) to be relatively low as well. They are not. The only conclusion possible is that the data fails to demonstrate an influence of complementarity of sex of sibling on marital adjustment. The difference between A and C should perhaps be attributed to chance because it is contrary to the no difference pattern of the rest of the table.

#### Influence of Birth Order on Mate-selection

A cursory glance at the number of couples represented in each of the ten possible combinations in the sample raises the question whether persons have a greater tendency to choose a complementary spouse than a non-complementary one. Those groups representing complementary choices are larger than those representing non-complementary ones (Table 4).

In order to determine whether the frequency distribution is not due to chance, it is necessary to have an estimate of the frequency distribution which would occur by chance. It cannot be assumed that if selections occurred by chance, the same number would occur in each combination of birth order. The relative number of people in the four birth-order positions in the general population and the laws governing binomial distribution would determine the estimated frequency by chance. Studies on the effect of birth-order combinations on mate-selection do not report expected frequency, nor do they indicate the method used to calculate expected frequencies (Birtchnell, 1977; Kemper, 1966; Ward, 1974).

A search of government documents yielded no figures for the frequency of people in the four birth-order positions. It is possible, however, to calculate a rough estimate from the number of families with the different numbers of children reported for several dates by the US Census. The number of families with one child is the number of only children in the population. The sum of the number of families with two children and the number with three or more children gives the number of oldest children and also the numbers of youngest children. Because US Census data does not break down the category of three or more children, the number of middle children can not be calculated from these data.

It was assumed that the subjects in the sample, whose duration of marriage ranged from one to 47 years, selected their mates during the period from 1935 to 1981. In order to obtain a rough estimate of the relative frequency of the four birth-order positions among the adult population during these years, the US Census figures for 1930, 1940,

1951, and 1960 (Bureau of the Census, 1938, 1946, 1952, 1961) were used; the number of families with one child for each census were summed to yield a figure for only children, and the number of families with two, three, or more children for each census were summed to yield a figure for oldest as well as for youngest children. The ratio that resulted was 3: 3: 1 for oldest to youngest to only (Table 8).

This ratio is only a rough estimate of relative frequency. There are several problems. The 1910 census lists children 10 and under; the others include children 18 and under. Some families will have been counted twice. Some with one child in one census may have had more than one in the next, and some with several in one census may have had only one in the next. Deaths are assumed to have occurred randomly with regard to birth-order positions. However, it was felt that this procedure should yield as good an estimate of the relative frequency of birth order as is possible with the data available.

The present sample confirmed the population ratios. The frequency of birth-order position in the sample was calculated in the following manner: the frequencies of all combinations in which a specific birth order occurred were added together, the frequency of the combination of that birth order combining with itself being included twice, to obtain a frequency for that specific birth order. The 327 couples represented 654 birth-order position occurrences. The frequency of each position is listed in Table 8. The relative frequency of oldest, middle, youngest, and only children was 30: 33: 25: 12.

The ratio of oldest to youngest to only in the sample is remarkably similar to that estimated for the population, 3: 3: 1. In the sample the number of middle children is similar to the numbers of

Table 8 Frequency of Birth-Order Positions in Population  
as estimated from Census Data (1910-1960) and  
Frequency of Birth Order Positions in Sample

Birth-Order Positions	Census Population		Sample	
	Estimated Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Oldest	101,541,000	30	198	30
Middle	(Not given, but assumed) 101,541,000	30	216	33
Youngest	101,541,000	30	163	25
Only	33,996,000	10	77	12
Total		100	654	100



oldest and youngest; therefore, it was assumed that the correct estimate of the relative frequency of middle children in the population is similar to that of oldest and youngest. The estimated ratio for the four positions then becomes 3: 3: 3: 1.

This estimated ratio of frequency of birth-order positions in the population was used to calculate expected frequency of the various combinations of birth-order positions. The calculation was performed in the following manner. If the relative frequency in the population of oldest, middle, youngest, and only children is 3: 3: 3: 1, a group of a hundred persons would consist of 30 oldest, 30 middle, 30 youngest, and 10 only children. If two such groups of 100 persons should combine to form 100 couples, and choices are by chance with regard to birth-order position, then we could expect the following frequency of choices: the 30 oldest in one group will choose 9 oldest, 9 middle, 9 youngest, and 3 only children; the 30 middle and the 30 youngest will choose similarly; the 10 only children will choose 3 oldest, 3 middle, 3 youngest and one only. When the frequency of identical combinations are summed, the frequencies listed in Table 9 result. These frequencies represent percentages since they sum to 100.

As is evident from Table 9, the actual relative frequency of the birth-order combinations in the sample is remarkably similar to the estimated relative frequency. It was deemed unnecessary to perform a chi-square test. It was concluded from the data that the present study fails to demonstrate an influence of complementarity of birth-order position on mate-selection.

Table 9 Expected Frequencies of Combinations  
and Sample Frequencies

Birth-Order Combination	Expected Frequency in Percen- tage	Sample Frequency	
		Percentage	Number
1. Oldest and Youngest	18	17	54
2. Oldest and Middle	18	14	46
3. Middle and Youngest	18	20	65
4. Oldest and Only	6	9	28
5. Middle and Only	6	8	27
6. Youngest and Only	6	4	14
7. Middle and Middle	9	12	39
8. Oldest and Oldest	9	11	35
9. Youngest and Youngest	9	5	15
10. Only and Only	1	1	4
Total	100	100	327

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

It is puzzling that the present study failed to demonstrate a positive association between birth-order complementarity and marital adjustment. This finding is counter to that of three other researchers, Kemper (1966), Toman (1961) and Weller, Natan, and Hazi (1974). There may be cultural differences which explain this counter-evidence in the case of Toman's work which was done in Germany and in the case of the Weller, Natan, and Hazi study which was done in Israel. The Kemper study showed a variation in marital satisfaction for some birth order-combinations; perhaps the fact that this study was done 17 years ago accounts in part for its positive results. The date of the Toman work may also be relevant in the same way. Mores about marital structure and family structure have changed some in the past few decades and these changes may have effected the phenomena under focus.

The negative findings of this study are similar to the findings of three studies. Two of these used small samples and cannot be considered very significant (Pinsky, 1975; Levinger, 1965). But the Birtchnell study (1977) used a substantial sample; it is claimed to be an exhaustive test of Toman's hypotheses by the author. The present study used both a valid and reliable measuring instrument of marital adjustment and a relatively large sample; it must be taken seriously as well. There exist two possible explanations: either complementarity of birth order has no effect on the marriage relationship, or it has

an effect which the method used failed to uncover.

Perhaps the first possibility is true: complementarity of birth-order position has no effect on marital adjustment. An examination of the assumptions on which the predictions were based is in order. First, birth-order position was assumed to influence personality. This assumption may be questionable. The influence of birth-order position is probably less mechanistic and predictable than the duplication theorem proposed by Toman (1961) implies. As was pointed out in Chapter 1, Adler recognized several reasons for variation in the influence of each birth-order position. First, the situation of a position varies from family to family; it depends on the parent's attitudes and abilities, on the life-style choices of the siblings, on the cultural setting, on the spacing, on the sex of the siblings and other factors. Secondly, there are individual differences among children in their interpretation of similar situations, resulting in correspondingly different responses. Thirdly, there are also individual differences among children in their response to similar interpretations. While some general trends may be discernable with regard to birth-order positions, resulting personalities are unpredictable, because the process of personality formation is meaning-mediated. The inconsistency of many of the findings on birth order, as reported in Chapter 2, bears out the complexity of the relationship between birth order and personality. As Birtchnell (1977) has pointed out, there is little evidence from the literature to support Toman's contention that he can predict a person's personality from his family constellation.

A second assumption on which the hypotheses were based pertains to the compatibility of the personalities supposedly produced by

complementary birth-order positions. As was noted in Chapter 2, research on birth order and those personality characteristics relevant for complementary personalities is not abundant. Such well-documented characteristics as intellectual capacity, popularity, self-esteem, competitiveness, and proneness to becoming maladjusted do not lend themselves to a complementary hypothesis. Such characteristics as independence, conformity, and responsibility may be conducive to marital success in either equal or unequal degrees of presence in the spouses. There seems to be no documentation of characteristics associated with birth-order positions which obviously lend themselves to complementary hypotheses, such as dominance and submissiveness.

A third assumption made regards the benefits of duplication: the more a marriage relationship duplicates sibling relationships, the more successful it will be. The implication that sibling relationships are always good is questionable. Sibling relationships may involve substantial conflicts and competition. The carrying over of the attitudes, methods, and expectations of a sibling relationship may introduce conflict as well as harmony; for example, a youngest child who chafed under an older child's assertions of dominance and superiority is not likely to welcome similar assertions by his or her spouse. Any good effect resulting from personality compatibility may well be cancelled by a reenactment of sibling conflict patterns.

It may be, then, that complementarity of birth-order position is not as likely to influence marital adjustment as was thought. It is relevant here to note that the literature, including the present study, has been unable to document an influence of birth-order complementarity on mate-selection (Chapter 2); apparently persons of a complementary birth-

order position are no more attractive to would-be spouses than are persons of a non-complementary birth order. It may be that persons are neither more attracted to nor get along better with persons of complementary rather than of non-complementary birth-order positions.

A second possible explanation of the negative findings, mentioned above, is that birth-order position influences the marital relationship but the method used failed to uncover this effect. It may have been detrimental to use a simple measure of birth order rather than one which takes into account factors which influence the situation of the position; such factors may be spacing -- the years between births of siblings, special siblings, and extra-familial competitors.

A second problem in method may be that marital adjustment was not a precise enough dependent variable. It may be that birth-order positions influence the marital relationship in different ways, both positive and negative. In that case marital adjustment is too comprehensive a concept and should be replaced with more specific concepts. There are contrasting styles of adjustment; patterns of relating may vary with different combinations of birth-order positions. A closer look at the marriage relationship may be required before any positive relationship to combinations of birth order can be demonstrated.

Hypothetical similarity of birth-order combination to traditional marital roles did not prove to be related to marital adjustment. This evidence is contrary to that of the Kemper study (1966) and in harmony with that of the Weller, Natan and Hazi study (1979). There has been a general shift in the last few decades from the traditional, more differentiated, structure to a more symmetrical and flexible structure of marriage (Skolnick, 1980). Under the former structure, the husband was

given greater dominance than under the latter, and as a result the matching of the husband's and the wife's learned attitudes and expectations with the assigned dominant and submissive roles was more important. Under the latter structure, the roles are more flexible and equalitarian; hence there are to a lesser extent assigned roles to which to match learned attitudes and expectations. Under a symmetrical structure, couples have greater opportunity to develop patterns of relationship which are suitable to themselves. Under such a structure, it should be less relevant which spouse experienced the oldest sibling position. The shift from the traditional to a symmetrical structure of marriage in recent decades may therefore explain why the present study failed to replicate the findings of the Kemper study of 1966.

The pattern suggested by the direction of difference in the data, that marriages with a wife of the more senior sibling position are more adjusted than those with a husband of the more senior sibling position, is difficult to explain. The effects may be due to chance. If not, then a closer examination of the power dimension in marriage is in order. Or, on the other hand, perhaps marital adjustment is a product, not just of the compatibility of spouses, but also of the expertise of the wife in managing a household. Even in equalitarian marriages, as informal observation confirms, the wife has final responsibility for the household. Perhaps senior siblings are better prepared for this role and thus create a better environment for marital adjustment.

#### Implications for Further Research

Before birth-order position as a variable in marital adjustment be discarded, it may be beneficial that researchers investigate the presence of personality characteristics which lend themselves to a

complementarity hypothesis in persons of the different birth-order positions. Documentation of variation in the occurrence of characteristics such as dominance and submissiveness with birth-order positions would support further study of complementarity; failure to produce documentation would support cessation of such study.

It may be beneficial for further investigations of birth-order complementarity that factors which possibly influence the situation of a birth-order position be taken into account. Spacing, special siblings, extra-familial competitions are a few such possible factors.

Another suggestion pertains to the dependent variable. More sensitive to the influence of birth-order position than marital adjustment may be patterns of marital relationship. Exploration of patterns may uncover trends of specific patterns which are associated with the different combinations. Such information would be welcome and helpful to married couples, as it could help them understand better their relationship. Similarly, such information could be helpful to marriage therapists in their treatment of clients.

The issue of the effect of which spouse is an oldest sibling on marital adjustment deserves further study. The present study may point to a trend which can be duplicated. Exploration of why marriages are better adjusted if the wife is the senior sibling, if this is true, is in order.



# Appendix A

## Occupations of Subjects

- |       |                               |                      |                   |
|-------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| I.    | Disabled                      |                      |                   |
| II.   | Professional                  |                      |                   |
|       | Coach                         | Minister             | Registered Nurse  |
|       | Counselor                     | Pharmacist           | Social Worker     |
|       | Dentist                       | Physician            | School Principal  |
|       | Lawyer                        | Professor            | Teacher           |
|       | Medical Profession            | Psychologist         | Teacher of Nurses |
| III.  | Retired                       |                      |                   |
| IV.   | Commercial                    |                      |                   |
|       | Bill Collector                | Realtor              |                   |
|       | Business Administrator        | Sales Representative |                   |
|       | Business V. P.                | Self-employed        |                   |
|       | Insurance Manager             | Stock Broker         |                   |
|       | Insurance Salesman            | Store Manager        |                   |
|       | Manufacturer's Representative | Store owner          |                   |
| V.    | Office                        |                      |                   |
|       | Secretary                     |                      |                   |
|       | Clerk                         |                      |                   |
| VI.   | Skilled                       |                      |                   |
|       | Accountant                    | Cost Analyst         | Mechanic          |
|       | Architect                     | Crude Oil Pumper     | Painter           |
|       | Army Officer                  | Electrician          | Paramedic         |
|       | Artist                        | Engineer             | Photographer      |
|       | Assembly Trainer              | Farmer               | Programmer        |
|       | Banker                        | Fireman              | State Trooper     |
|       | Bookkeeper                    | Glazier              | Tool & Die Maker  |
|       | Carpenter                     | Head Operator        | Typesetter        |
|       | Construction Supervisor       | Intramural Referee   |                   |
|       | Contractor                    | Librarian            |                   |
| VII.  | Student                       |                      |                   |
| VIII. | Unemployed                    |                      |                   |
| IX.   | Unskilled                     |                      |                   |
|       | Body Shop                     | Driver               |                   |
|       | Carpenter Assistant           | Factory Worker       |                   |
|       | Construction Worker           | Library Assistant    |                   |
|       | Deckhand                      | Technical Assistant  |                   |
|       | Deputy                        | Trucker              |                   |

APPENDIX B  
Questionnaire

1. Indicate your present marital status: Married \_\_\_\_ Divorced \_\_\_\_ Separated \_\_\_\_.
2. What is your occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is the highest grade in school or scholastic degree which you have completed?  
\_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: All the questions which follow refer to your present or last marriage only.

4. This is (was) my first \_\_\_\_, second \_\_\_\_, or more \_\_\_\_ marriage.
5. What is your husband's occupation? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the highest grade in school or scholastic degree which your husband has completed? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Indicate your combined income for last year: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
8. How long have (were) you and your husband been married? \_\_\_\_ years and \_\_\_\_ months
9. How old were you when you and your husband married? \_\_\_\_ years
10. How old was your husband when you and he were married? \_\_\_\_ years
11. What is your faith? Protestant \_\_\_\_ Catholic \_\_\_\_ Jewish \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_  
(if other, so indicate \_\_\_\_ ) none \_\_\_\_
12. What is your husband's faith? Protestant \_\_\_\_ Catholic \_\_\_\_ Jewish \_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_ (if other, so indicate \_\_\_\_ ) none \_\_\_\_
13. List the children of your present or last marriage, in order of their birth with their ages. Instead of using names, use the terms "boy" or "girl":  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. List yourself and all your brothers and sisters in order of birth, with their date of birth. Do not give names but use the terms "brother" or "sister"; for example, brother 1942, sister 1944, self 1948, brother 1950, etc. Include deceased brothers and sisters noting both year of birth and death; for example, brother, 1955, died 1970.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ |

15. Do your parents still live together? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.
16. If one or both of your parents left your home, indicate the reason for the departure:  
death \_\_\_\_, divorce \_\_\_\_, other \_\_\_\_\_.
17. Do your husband's parents still live together? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_.

18. If one or both of his parents left his home, indicate the reason for the departure: death \_\_\_\_\_, divorce \_\_\_\_\_, or other \_\_\_\_\_  
How old was he when the parent first to leave, left? \_\_\_\_\_ years.
19. List your husband and all his brothers and sisters in order of birth with birth dates. Do not give names but use the terms "brother" and "sister." Include any deceased brothers and sisters noting both their date of birth and death.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 5. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ 7. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_

### DYADIC ADJUSTMENT SCALE\*\*

*Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.*

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling family finances	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Matters of recreation	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Religious matters	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Demonstrations of affection	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Friends	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Sex relations	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. Philosophy of life	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. Amount of time spent together	5	4	3	2	1	0
12. Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
13. Household tasks	5	4	3	2	1	0
14. Leisure time interests and activities	5	4	3	2	1	0
15. Career decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
	All the Time	Most of the Time	More Often Than Not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. How often do you or your mate leave the house after a fight?	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	5	4	3	2	1	0
19. Do you confide in your mate?	5	4	3	2	1	0
20. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	0	1	2	3	4	5
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	0	1	2	3	4	5
22. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves"?	0	1	2	3	4	5

23. Do you kiss your mate?

Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
4	3	2	1	0
All of Them	Most of Them	Some of Them	Very Few of Them	None of Them
4	3	2	1	0

24. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less Than Once a Month	Once or Twice a Month	Once or Twice a Week	Once a Day	More Often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
26. Laugh together	0	1	2	3	4	5
27. Calmly discuss something	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. Work together on a project	0	1	2	3	4	5

These are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometimes disagree. Indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no)

Yes	No	
0	1	29. Being too tired for sex.
0	1	30. Not showing love.

31. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy," represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please circle the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A Little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship?

- 5 I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.  
 4 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.  
 3 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.  
 2 It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I can't do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.  
 1 It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.  
 0 My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

\*Source: Graham B. Spanier, "Measuring Dyadic Adjustment," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 38 (February 1976), pp. 15-28. Copyrighted 1976 by the National Council on Family Relations. Reprinted by permission.

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## WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

BOWLING GREEN, KENTUCKY 42101

Department of Psychology

This questionnaire has been prepared as part of a master's thesis project at Western Kentucky University. The purpose of this project is to study some aspects of the marriage relationship. The information gained will be used for information purposes only. So that we can keep this information anonymous please do not put your name anywhere on these pages or on the envelope provided for their return through campus mail.

Would you be so kind as to answer the questions. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Please answer as honestly as you can; do not omit any questions. Do not discuss answers with others before answering. Thankyou for being willing to help.

Please return the questionnaire within two days through campus mail in the envelope provided.

Mrs. Corry Vos

Mrs. Corry Vos

P. S.  
The results will be  
available after April 15.  
Please contact us if you  
are interested.

Dr. John O'Connor  
Department of Psychology

Dr. Delbert Hayden  
Dept. of Home Economics & Family Living

This questionnaire has been prepared as part of a master's project at Western Kentucky University. The purpose of this project is to study some aspects of the marriage relationship. The information gained will be used for research purposes only. So that we can keep this information anonymous please do not put your name anywhere on these pages.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Thank you for being willing to help. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer as honestly as you can.

Corry Vos, MA.

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